

Sailing to Barcelona – Saving the Planet?

A Mediterranean odyssey to WCC 2008

A mid-voyage report from Cagliari, Sardinia by Richard Clarke, Director of the Center for European Protected Areas research at the London University

At last! On Tuesday 24th September months of planning came to fruition as the Balkan contingent of 'Sailing to Barcelona' gathered in the ancient Montenegrin port of Kotor. The quay is packed with families (including babes in arms), relatives and friends of the crew, here to wave goodbye (3 weeks is a long time) together with what looks like the cream of the Montenegrin armed forces, in their ceremonial white military suits. On deck, a ceremonial launch opened by the Mayor of Kotor, with some formal speechifying, from the Montenegrin Minister of Defence (a crucial player, for the Jadran is a training ship, but a ship of the fleet of the Montenegrin navy nevertheless), and from the Minister of Tourism and Environment, (a curious combination but perhaps appropriate in Montenegrin circumstance), each giving their good wishes for the voyage. A military band plays as the last ropes are cast, and the 75-year old sailing vessel Jadran – once the pride of the Yugoslav navy (the pre-War Kingdom and the post-war Socialist Republic), finally sets off.

The enterprise had started small. A coffee bar conversation in Belgrade, between staff in the IUCN South-East Regional Office, and the Serbian Institute of Nature Conservation (with which it is happily co-located) had led, first, to the possibility, of 'borrowing' a boat (presently moored in Trogir, up the coast in Croatia) belonging to one of the Institute's staff. But at only 4 metres long and with an outboard motor of some antiquity, it was unlikely to last the distance. Besides, he would have to ask his mother, and who knows what she would say? Or perhaps they could hire a boat from Barcelona or a nearby port for the occasion. But this would be '*šminka*' – a petty and inadequate gesture for such an 869-urananor a9(e)tieeeO 87.5()6eOt wll6.4(t)-6-3.9(8ituWorld(an)7.4.1(i)Con.7(87erv7(e)e).47h)4.6(9n)11()4.6oiaieO Nature (IUCN) remains unique as a democratic union of over 1,000 states, government agencies and NGOs in over 160 countries. Its World Conservation Congresses, held every four years, are the principal discussion and policy-making forum for world conservation action. This year, with marine and coastal conservation a special priority, there would be a series of events involving vessels that had sailed to the conference. It would be a great shame if the Balkan countries – especially those with an Adriatic coastline were not part of this initiative, and it was clear that something special would be needed. But what could this special initiative be?

Eventually, inspiration struck. Wasn't there a boat, built as a training ship 75 years ago for the

route to the WCC. Most of the 'Dinaric Arc' countries are represented - from last minute addition this), from Montenegro, from Serbia, Slovenia (representative), from an English academic, plus a representative from the IUCN SEE Regional Office in Italy, and from UNESCO's Regional Office in Venice would join us in Sardinia.

The rest? Well, the Jadran

_____ has a permanent crew of 10, plus the captain and first mate. The remaining 15 seamen required to sail such a vessel had been drafted in from other ships to make a complement (some have never 'sailed' before), plus *u enici* (naval high school students) and *studenti* (from the military academy or the merchant navy faculty of the university). All are male (apart from the ship's doctor, drafted in for the occasion) and most, with the male members of the WCC team, accommodated in two 30-bed compartments in the ship's hold. An odd hierarchy exists - *u enici* and *studenti* in the top buks, where they have to contend with dripping pipes and bulkhead divisions, drafted seamen in the bottom, and the WCC contingent, significantly, in the middle bunks. The women in our team have 'first class' accommodation – cabins above waterline and permission to use the Captain's WC and shower, with running hot water, rather than the 'picturesque' facilities afforded to the crew. This was the first time that women had taken part in a voyage, and our Captain was clearly anxious before we set off. Detailed rules were issued, mostly observed in the most relaxed fashion, and soon a good *rapport* was established all round. Like the crew and the trainees, we were here to work – in the case of the WCC contingent, to learn from each other, network, plan, publicise,

see how we could take our activity to a new level, so seminars on board (in the ship's hold, not the easiest place for presentations and discussion) have been a regular feature of the voyage.

Some interesting comparisons have emerged, between philosophical as well as institutional approaches to conservation. For example, on the institutional level, all the former Yugoslav republics have semi-independent State Institutes for nature conservation charged with species protection, research and monitoring, and the designation of protected areas (though Serbia traces its Institute back to 1948, Croatia dates hers only to 2002). But in Bulgaria, the 'competent authority' is the Ministry of Environment, with research contracted to university departments and specialist research institutes – all within the Academy of Sciences. The consequence is a science-driven emphasis on 'basic' ecological research, with the danger of an 'implementation deficit' with conservation